

ABA Journal Features Roger Royse's Pivot to Health Tech After Cancer Diagnosis

February 25, 2025 Roger Royse

PRACTICES Emerging Companies and Venture Capital

After receiving an unexpected diagnosis, Haynes Boone Partner [Roger Royse](#) began focusing some of his venture capital practice on supporting cancer therapy tech startup companies. *ABA Journal* featured Royse's passion in a "Members Who Inspire" story.

Read an excerpt below:

In 2022, Royse read about health care company Grail's multicancer early detection test, which through a blood sample can screen for more than 50 different types of cancer. He prioritized his own health and knew there was some history of the disease in his family because his father had been diagnosed with stomach cancer in the early 1990s.

Royse decided to take the test, paying out of pocket since his health insurance plan didn't cover it. An oncologist called him with the results: The test had detected signs of cancer, and he needed further testing....

Royse followed up with an MRI, which showed a mass on his pancreas. After a biopsy, he was diagnosed with Stage 2 pancreatic cancer. He began treatment, which included six months of chemotherapy and surgery. Because the chemo had little effect, he also received an experimental cancer vaccine that he discovered through his network....

Royse says he has shown no evidence of disease since July. A partner in the Palo Alto, California, office of Haynes Boone, he now focuses part of his practice on supporting cancer therapy tech startups. He also helped create a community for these companies and for fellow cancer patients in other meaningful ways.

"He's a very impressive advocate for himself and for the domain," says Ari Akerstein, the co-founder and CEO of the CancerHacker Lab, an early-stage health tech accelerator aimed at improving cancer care. He worked with Royse to launch the company last year.

"There's this ethos that we're trying to build to make things better for all," adds Akerstein, a blood cancer survivor. "He's kind of the role model of what that could look like. He really embodies what it is that we're trying to do for patients."

After his diagnosis, Royse talked to dozens of companies and researchers, read hundreds of academic papers and attended several cancer research conferences.

He feels a lot could be done for cancer patients that isn't part of standard medical care and wants to bring more attention to new and developing therapies. He created CancerStartup.com to provide a place where cancer tech startups and potential investors could share and discuss their solutions to fighting the disease. ...

In August 2023, Royse discovered the Cancer Patient Lab, a nonprofit organization that connects advanced cancer patients and their caregivers to each other and to experts to help them make informed decisions about treatment. It hosts weekly discussions with oncologists, scientists and researchers; provides access to cutting-edge testing and treatment options and other resources; and offers a platform for patients to share their stories. ...

Royse shared his own story with Cancer Patient Lab and participated in presentations and panel discussions that are available on the website. He also became a member of Cancer Patient Lab's board and provides pro bono services to the organization. ...

Some lawyers may not want to share that they've had cancer, fearing it makes them appear less capable of doing their jobs, adds Power, a lymphoma survivor. But Royse has taken the opposite approach.

[Read the full article here.](#)